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Care must be taken to preserve quality of Thatcher Brook

While people in Biddeford and surrounding towns benefit from the commercial development on the outskirts of the city, it's important that we still take all necessary precautions to protect the surrounding natural areas that can so easily be spoiled by human activity.

concerted effort to make sure people are educated about living near the brook. City engineers met with brook abutters on July 18 to tell them about runoff mitigation and other ways they can keep the brook healthy. These techniques apply to anyone who lives near a water body – and many people might be surprised, if they look at a map, to realize how close they live to one, too.

In Our Opinion

To that end, the city is promoting an educational campaign to preserve the quality of Thatcher Brook, a Saco River tributary that happens to run through some of the city's biggest commercial developments. The brook begins near Andrews Road, not far from the Biddeford Crossing, Walmart and other shopping centers, and runs out to the Saco River. Motorists see this brook where the Maine Turnpike bridges it near Exit 32, as well as under Main Street between Biddeford High School and the Rotary Park entrance.

Because paved surfaces and pipes send polluted water into the brook without any buffer, it's important to maintain vegetation along the water body, city planning engineer Jennie Franceschi advised. As well, the use of harmful ingredients for lawn care and vehicle washing make their way to water bodies, especially if there are areas of bare soil on the property, so only environmentally friendly products should be used. Trash and pet waste also end up in the brook when left on lawns, so it's important to pick them up.

We're glad the city's planning department is being proactive in educating homeowners and also requiring developers to put mitigation methods into practice to improve this brook, despite the growth all around it. We hope their combined efforts, and those of all others who might come into contact with this water body, will keep it off the federal U.S. Environmental Protection Agency "impaired" list and see it improved to the point that it's no longer on that list in Maine, either.

Thatcher Brook runs about eight miles and its watershed extends into Arundel, covering more than 4,500 acres. That's a lot of land to keep in mind when keeping harmful contaminants out of the brook.

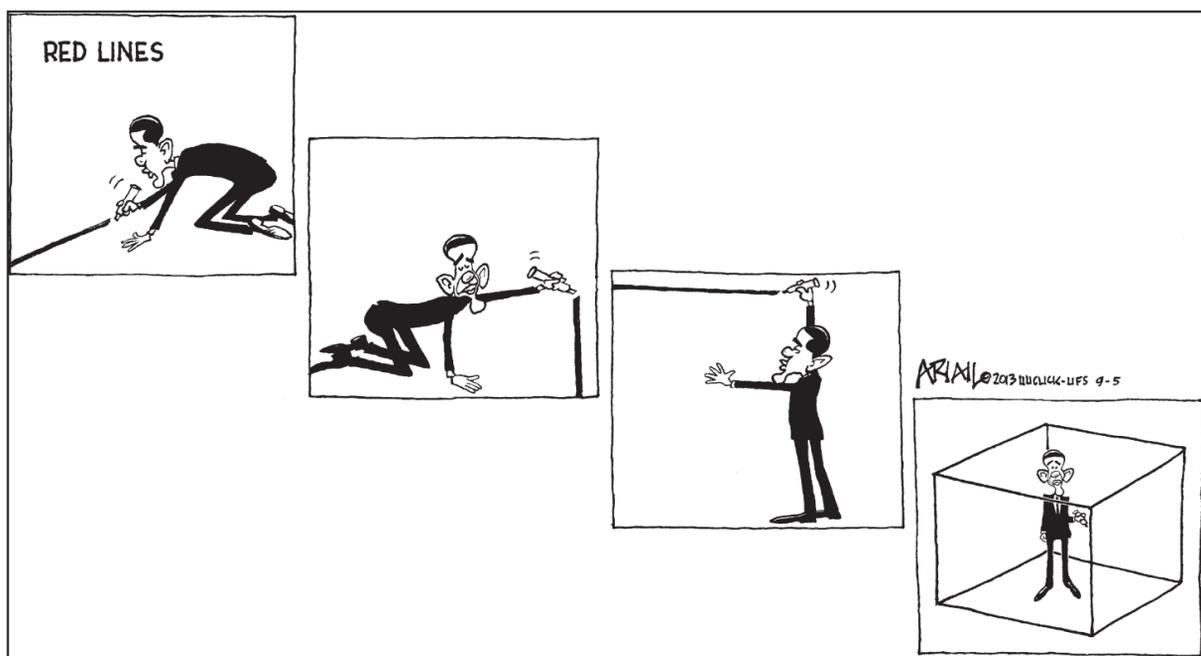
It's all of our responsibility to maintain the health of our environment, even amidst development, so we can continue to enjoy the natural beauty that makes Maine such a great place to live.

Thatcher Brook is not currently meeting the state's water quality standards, according to the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and has been listed as an "impaired" water body since 2009. According to the DEP, stormwater runoff is the most likely culprit in polluting the brook. Homes and businesses create impervious surfaces such as roofs and pavement, which allow unfiltered oil and metals to flow directly into the watershed.

To help remedy the problem, the city is making a

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Today's editorial was written by Managing Editor Kristen Schulze Muszynski on behalf of the Journal Tribune Editorial Board. Questions? Comments? Contact Kristen by calling 282-1535, ext. 322, or via email at kristenm@journaltribune.com.



Impeachment not meant as political tactic

Amid the partisan controversy in Congress, some Republican members of the U.S. House of Representatives say they will try to impeach President Obama.

Do they believe that Obama is guilty of what the Constitution calls "high crimes and misdemeanors?" Do they believe they can be successful?

The answers to both questions is "no." They want to use the impeachment process for purely political purposes, mostly as a way of tying up the House so it cannot do any other business, like paying for Obamacare.

And they seem to believe they could avoid any blame for bringing the unfunded federal government to a halt, because the Congress would be engaged in the serious business of trying to toss the president out of office.

Surely, the Founding Fathers did not mean that impeachment – the bringing of charges by the House – or conviction by the U.S. Senate should be used as a political tactic.

It was intended to allow a president who was a criminal or who violated the express terms of the Constitution to be removed. But it has never been used for the intended purposes.

Obama could find himself in line after the two presidents who were impeached, because a majority in the House thought they were usurpers and barely had the right to hold the office.

Andrew Johnson, who moved up from the vice presidency after Lincoln's assassination, was the first president to be impeached. He was a Democrat, chosen by the Republican Lincoln to create a national unity ticket.

His problem was that Congress was dominated by Republicans who disliked his willingness to go easy on the South after the Civil War and to deny help for the newly freed slaves. They saw him as hav-

ing distorted Lincoln's legacy.

So the Republicans cooked up a law that probably was unconstitutional and then impeached him for disobeying it. At the end of the Senate trial, he was not convicted because seven Republicans, including Maine's William Pitt Fessenden, refused to go along with the ploy.

Bill Clinton was impeached by a Republican-controlled House for his problems in telling the truth about his sexual encounters. Once again, the Senate did not convict, this time with a few Republicans, including Maine's Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, refusing to go along with the misuse of the impeachment power.

Though elected twice, Clinton, like Johnson, was seen by the GOP as a president who should not have held the office. The presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush had set the government on a clear conservative course, which Clinton had diverted by his elections.

Congress tried to take control of the government, just as it has with Johnson, by dumping a president in whom it had no confidence. Fortunately, there were enough people in Congress who thought the Constitution was more important than partisan games.

But Clinton showed the ploy was not entirely a wasted effort. He sought common ground with the Republicans on some

issues, partly because he was less liberal than many had thought and partly to appease them. That's pretty clearly the reason he went along with changing the name of the capital's airport to honor Reagan instead of Washington.

Obama, too, is seen by conservative Republicans as almost an accidental president. After the Democratic Party's losses to the tea party in 2010, Obama should not have been re-elected two years later. But he was.

Perhaps those GOP House members now seeking impeachment believe they can get Obama to yield on continuing with Obamacare and appease them to avoid nasty impeachment proceedings.

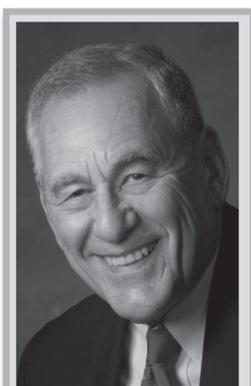
The two historic impeachment proceedings and the current talk of one against Obama have something in common. A disciplined majority in at least one house of Congress seeks to express its lack of confidence in the president.

In other words, the opposition would use impeachment in the same way the opposition in a parliamentary democracy uses a so-called "no confidence vote." It can embarrass the prime minister and, if successful, can cause a new election.

Of course, the United States does not have a parliamentary system. But that may not stop some members of Congress from using impeachment to paralyze the president for the remainder of his term, as it did for Johnson, or to adopt some of their proposals, as it did with Clinton.

Still, it is unlikely that the latest impeachment talk will get very far. The Republican House leadership seems to want to get on with a direct legislative struggle with Obama, probably fearing the political fall-out from misuse of the impeachment process.

— Gordon L. Weil is an author, publisher, consultant, and former official of international organizations and the U.S. and Maine governments.



Gordon L. Weil

Opinions:

The Journal Tribune regularly publishes readers' opinions on this page. Letters should be brief - no more than 500 words. They may be edited to meet space and other requirements. Please include a telephone number for verification. Letters can be emailed to kristenm@journaltribune.com, faxed to 282-3138, mailed to Editor, Journal Tribune, 457 Alfred St., Biddeford, ME 04005, or dropped off at our office. Op-eds are also accepted, on a case-by-case basis, from organizations and political representatives.

Readers' Forum

Littlefield, Herlihy will not serve Sanford best as mayor

The Sanford Charter Commission's work is done. Now, Brad Littlefield and Mayor Maura Herlihy want to make changes the citizens voted in November 2012 for the charter, and it is not for two councilors to make changes.

The way Councilors Alan Walsh, Littlefield and Herlihy acted at the Sept. 3 meeting was rude and the citizens are talking about them.

These councilors were elected by the people to do a job.

During my first meeting with City Manager Steven Buck, I told him that this city's government is not going to work until this council shows respect to the people, as well as their fellow councilors.

I was elected to serve on the charter commission and Jonathan Mapes was appointed. I also served on the "Casino No" committee with Kendra Williams. The way the three of them spoke to Kendra, Jon, the superintendent of schools and other school personnel was uncalled for, and these councilors owe them an apology.

I want to remind everyone that elections are coming up: one seat for mayor and one seat for councilor. The public is not happy with Littlefield and Herlihy. They were elected to do a job for the citizens of Sanford and Springvale, not bully the citizens like the charter commissioners bullied me when I did not agree with them. I have not forgotten that experience and there

are many citizens who have not forgotten those meetings. One good thing I did was taped all the meetings of the charter commission, and the proof is in the pudding.

A lot of citizens have had it with these three councilors. One person will win a seat on the council and one person will become mayor. The people want councilors and a mayor who shows respect not disrespect, to the citizens. Two of them are running for mayor as well as others who are well-known and who respect their fellow man.

The citizens are tired of listening to these councilors' power play with each other.

If this November election goes as the citizens plan, one of them will be gone and one will remain a councilor. We did it last year and we can do it again this year.

Four reasons why two of them hopefully won't make it:

No respect from Littlefield and Herlihy for other councilors.

Shameful council for the City of Sanford.

Bullying the citizens who get up to talk.

Giving no answer when they ask a question.

I say, shame on all of them. The citizens will be voting for someone new for mayor and for that open seat for a councilor. This should be a wakeup call to this council. They must stop being insulting to the citizens and learn what the word respect means.

The charter is what Littlefield and

Herlihy wanted. Now they are making changes.

Remember, do not throw a vote away on these two, who think they own this city.

It's time for new faces, a new councilor for sure and a new mayor.

Marge Trowbridge
Sanford

Sanford Mainers grateful for support of volunteers

The Sanford Mainers Baseball Team wants to recognize the volunteers who gave up many of their summer evenings in 2013 to work at the games held at Goodall Park. The Mainers organization would not be able to provide the City of Sanford great collegiate baseball games if it were not for the many volunteers who work in all the various positions throughout the park during each and every game.

Each volunteer helps form the backbone and stability of the organization and they are: Shirley Benoit, Carol Cail, Janice Hardy, Annie Dwyer, Will Vance, Jim and Sandy Howard, Jillian Genereau, David Higgins, Carolyn Higgins, Lynn MacCannell, Brian Main, Thea Murphy, Keith Patterson, Peter Tallau, Jacob Ouellette, Joshua Toth, Matt Toth, Michael Toth, Jack Webb, Jenna Webb, Julie Bigelow, Kristen Coates, Colin L'Heureux, Jaclyn McCurry, Shamus Higgumbottom, Tayla Mulldune, Nathan Dubois, Steve Cabana, Erin St. Jean, Dawn Bowden,

Kaiti Titherington, and all the bat and ball boys and girls.

We also recognize the hard work of the various service organizations and non-profit groups that help work the Mainers concession stand during games.

Another group that has been a big part of every game for the last five seasons is the Red & White Foundation (Booster Wagon). Mike Perkins and his trusty crew of hardworking and dedicated people provide great food and snacks – fried dough is a big hit – for the fans, volunteers and teams. The Mainers are pleased that our partnership has been a winning one for them and us for so long.

Our heartfelt thanks and gratitude to each and every one of you and we hope to see you all back for the 2014 season.

Sara Gauthier, chairperson,
board of directors, Sanford Mainers
Baseball Team

Letter writer does not speak for all Christians

As a regular Journal Tribune reader, I was surprised to see a Reader's Forum letter on Monday Sept. 9 titled "Journal editorials disregard divine laws." I have never seen a Journal editorial that challenged a God in any way, nor have I read anything that in any way attacked Christianity.

I have read a number of editorials about civil rights issues that shade into areas where people of faith have a wide

variety of belief and interpretations. My most significant reaction came in reading that the author of this forum letter took it upon himself to speak as if there is monolithic Christian understanding to which every follower of Jesus subscribes. I happen to be a follower of the Christ. I agreed with the statements about God being a supreme being, and being the creator of all things. From there, my understanding departs from the author's words.

The Bible is not a law book for all the peoples of the world. The writings are intended to guide Jews and Christians, not to be a law code for the world. The recurring theme in much of the Bible is God's love for those who are God's people, and those who might become God's people. The religious "rules" in scripture have much more to do with not abusing whatever power one might have over others in one's family, neighborhood, church or synagogue, town, nation and even over foreigners in our land.

I hope that your readers will understand that there are significant numbers of Christians who are concerned with equality and justice in human relationships, and that civil rights are exactly what they are intended to be: Laws that govern the ways that people of many faiths and no faith get along in our diverse nation.

Keep up the good work, Journal Tribune editorial writers. You get it.

The Rev. Dr. Bruce Burnham
Alfred